Taylor Landing Recreation Site Improvements

Upper Willamette Resource Area
BLM Eugene District
Environmental Assessment
OR 1792A-EA-03-20

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to make improvements to Taylor Landing, a day use recreation site, located between the McKenzie River and Deerhorn Road in T. 17 S., R. 1 E., Section 19 W.M. (see maps in Appendix B). Taylor Landing is identified within the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (RMP) as an existing recreation site within the boundary of the McKenzie River Special Recreation Management Area (RMP, pg. 80). Historically, site management has been limited to site patrol and sanitation. In past years, gravel was added to the boat landing pad to harden the base.

The need for this proposal comes from the RMP, which states that "recreation sites should be maintained and improved as funding becomes available" (RMP, p. 83).

The purpose of this action is to: (1) improve the facilities for boat launching, fishing, picnicking, and river viewing to increase visitor satisfaction and safety when using the site; (2) Mitigate impacts to the riparian area by defining and hardening recreational use areas.

1.1 Conformance

This environmental assessment (EA) is tiered to the *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, April 1994, and the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, June 1995 as amended by the *Record of Decision (ROD)* for *Amendments to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, January 2001*. These documents are available for review at the Eugene District Office of the BLM, Eugene, Oregon or on the internet at http://www.or.blm.gov/nwfp.htm.

1.2 Scoping

Scoping was conducted with site visitors, neighbors, Lane County, the McKenzie River Trust, and the McKenzie River Guides. The December 2002 issue of the Eugene District Planning Update, "The Eye to the Future," described this project. This proposal was announced at several McKenzie Watershed Council meetings in 2002 and 2003.

1.3 Issues

Scoping by the interdisciplinary team and public input identified the following issues:

1. Issue: What would be the effect of the proposed alternatives on water quality and T&E fish?

2. Issue: What would be the effects of the alternatives upon ensuring visitor safety and public enjoyment of a developed recreation site?

2.0 ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section describes alternatives identified by the interdisciplinary team, and provides a comparison of alternatives. Schematics of the action alternatives and a site map are located in Appendix A.

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

No site improvements would be made under this alternative. Visitors would have continued access to the site for day-use activities common to the recreational area (e.g., fishing, launching, scenic viewing, and picnicking). This alternative retains or maintains the following components:

- Primitive (dirt with gravel) boat launch.
- Primitive ingress and egress apron (approach to boat launch).
- Chemical toilet, which is removed during the winter season.
- Accessible dirt road with an undeveloped boat launch at ending.
- Site signing attached to trees.
- Unimproved fishing and viewing spot.

2.2 Alternative 2

This alternative would allow visitors continued access to the site for day-use activities Site hardening and area closure/rehabilitation measures would emphasize non-vehicular traffic within the core activity area (with the exception of put-in and take-out traffic). This alternative includes the following components:

- Prefabricated, concrete panel boat launch (15'x50).
- Asphalt surface ingress/egress apron.
- CXT single unit vault toilet, which will be closed during the winter months.
- Retaining wall separating toilet from upper parking shoulder.
- Closure of dirt road with unimproved access included. Foot traffic permitted only.
- Site signing structures (e.g., identification, information and interpretive).

There will be a seasonal restriction on all construction activities during the critical nest season for spotted owls (March 1-July 15), so the project would be not likely to adversely affect owls. There would be seasonal restrictions if nesting or roosting eagles are found within 0.25 miles of the project area, so construction activities would have no effect on bald eagles.

2.3 Alternative 3

This alternative would allow visitors continued access to the site for day-use activities. The components listed under Alternative 2 are included in this alternative with addition of the following:

- Asphalt surface disabled parking spot and asphalt paths connecting it to toilet and fishing platform.
- Asphalt surface fishing/viewing platform with a rock safety curb.
- 3 picnicking units (e.g., tables, grills).
- Viewing benches.
- Compacted gravel access foot path connecting upper parking shoulder with picnicking units and asphalt surface apron. Adjacent dirt surface to be replanted with native vegetation.

There will be a seasonal restriction on all construction activities during the critical nest season for spotted owls (March 1-July 15), so the project would be not likely to adversely affect owls. There would be seasonal restrictions if nesting or roosting eagles are found within 0.25 miles of the project area, so construction activities would have no effect on bald

eagles.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

3.1 Recreation

Taylor Landing is approximately 5 acres. A 150'dirt road (8+ medium-sized vehicle parking capacity) intersects the eastern half of the analysis area. A graveled boat launch lays perpendicular to the McKenzie River and Deerhorn Road. Site signs are posted directly on large trees. Boulders placed previously to restrict vehicular access have been scattered by site visitors throughout the western portion of the site. A chemical toilet and galvanized garbage can are provided on site during part of the year. Rock fire rings are periodically assembled throughout the site by visitors. The Deerhorn Road shoulder is graded and supplemented with gravel to accommodate visitor parking.

Visitor use is mostly local. River corridor residents enjoy regular use of the site, as do residents of Springfield, OR, a community of 51,700 citizens. Popular activities include watercraft launching, fly fishing, bank fishing, scenic viewing and picnicking. BLM personnel conduct regular site maintenance and patrol.

The VRM (Visual Resource Management) classification is II. Under this classification, management of BLM administered land needs to meet the visual quality objective of retaining the existing character of a landscape (RMP, pg. 75).

3.2 Vegetation

The project area is a young alder stand with few conifers, typical of flood-prone areas along the McKenzie River. The stand is maintained as an alder stand by the yearly flooding. There are no signs of previous harvest. Although this site is lacking large snags and down logs, there were areas with a few small dead alders. Understory vegetation includes salmonberry, blackberries, and horsetails.

Noxious weeds

Small infestations of Scotch broom, St. Johns-Wort, English Ivy and Blackberries occur within the project area.

Special Status Plants

Surveys done during the 2001 field season found no Special Status Plants, lichens or bryophytes.

3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species

Northern Spotted Owl (Threatened)

Suitable nesting habitat for this species is mature forest (generally greater than 80 years old) with high canopy cover, an open understory, large down logs and large snags. There is no suitable nesting habitat within the proposed project area, but the project is directly adjacent to 30 acres of suitable habitat.

Dispersal habitat for spotted owls is generally defined as stands ranging from 40 to 79 years of age. There is no dispersal habitat within the proposed project area, but the project area is directly adjacent to 19 acres of dispersal habitat.

There is a spotted owl activity center and an associated Unmapped Late Successional Reserve just over 0.25 miles from the project area. This spotted owl pair nested successfully in 1992, but were not detected during surveys conducted in 1993-94, 1996-1999.

The proposed project area has been used as a recreation site for several years. There is a well-traveled paved county road that runs between the suitable habitat and the proposed project site, so ambient noise levels adjacent to the suitable habitat are currently high.

Bald Eagle (Threatened)
Suitable nesting habitat for bald eagles is mature forest within one mile of a lake, river or major tributary. The stand directly adjacent to the project area is suitable bald eagle habitat. The project area is within the McKenzie River Bald Eagle Habitat Area (BEHA). While the area adjacent to the project area is suitable eagle habitat, bald eagles have not been recorded utilizing this portion of the BEHA to date.

3.4 Survey and Manage

Wildlife
There is no suitable habitat on this site for any survey and manage wildlife species requiring pre-disturbance surveys.

Vascular Plants, Lichens and Bryophytes
Surveys done during the 2001 field season found no Survey and Manage vascular plants, lichens or bryophytes.

3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

Taylor Landing Recreation Site is located along the McKenzie River about 2.5 miles east of Walterville, Oregon. There is an island that divides the flow of the McKenzie River in this area, and much of the water volume flows to the north of this island. Taylor Landing is along the left bank of the south channel and it is within the floodplain of the river.

The McKenzie River is the drinking water source for Eugene, Oregon, and is on the 2002 Department of Environmental Quality 303(d) list for temperature. Portions of the Taylor Landing site have flooded in past years, resulting in sediment deposition and scouring from the river action. Located on the site are a native surfaced vehicle road and a footpath, both of which are susceptible to inundation by the river and erosion. During the winter months, fine sediment can be delivered to the river from storm runoff and vehicle use. The footpath located east of the existing boat ramp floods annually as does a portion of the vehicle road to the west. The annual high water line is estimated at an elevation of 319 feet.

3.6 Fisheries

The section of the McKenzie River is considered critical habitat for threatened Willamette River spring run chinook salmon (*Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). Spring chinook salmon use the river reaches adjacent to the project area for rearing and potentially for spawning habitat. Bull trout migrate through the adjacent reaches while traveling to and from spawning areas 15 miles or more upstream. Other fish species that use the McKenzie River include: winter and summer steelhead trout; rainbow and cutthroat trout; mountain whitefish; sculpin; dace; shiners; and pacific and western brook lamprey.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This incorporates the analysis of cumulative effects in the *USDA, The Eugene District Proposed RMP/EIS, November, 1994* (Chapter 4), and the *Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Amending the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigating Measures Standards and Guidelines, 2001.* The following analysis has a cumulative effects section that supplements those analyzed in the above documents, and provides site-specific information and analysis particular to the alternatives considered here.

4.1 Alternative I – No Action

4.1.1 Issue: What would be the effect of the alternatives on water quality and T&E fish?

Direct Effects: Erosion and sediment delivery to the McKenzie River would continue. During storm events, fluvial soils at the site would be susceptible to erosion and deposition from runoff and winter flooding. Erosion and soil disturbance would also continue from visitor use of footpaths and vehicle access on the floodplain soils adjacent to the existing boat ramp. With fluctuations of the river elevation (particularly during the winter months) sediment would be transported into the McKenzie River from these access routes. The existing boat launch would continue to erode as crushed gravel is washed away by the river.

Fishing pressure and water craft use at the boat launch site would continue at rates and levels currently expected for unimproved ramps and facilities. As such, disturbance to listed fish species would not be expected to change.

Deposition and scour of streambank and streambed materials immediately upstream and downstream of the boat ramp would not change since alteration of stream flow patterns would not occur.

Indirect Effects: Use of a portable sanitary restroom at this site use could result in vandalism and potential spills of sewage either directly into the McKenzie River, or on the soils adjacent to it.

Continued erosion and storm transport of in-water portions of the existing boat ramp, combined with maintenance replacement of crushed gravel material, could contribute to filling-in potential spawning gravels immediately downstream of the ramp. As such, a localized loss or degradation of spawning habitat may occur.

Cumulative Effects: As visitor use of the site continues or possibly increases over time, unstable floodplain soils could become more susceptible to erosion and sediment delivery to the McKenzie River. Without regular maintenance, this site may degrade and become a source of sedimentation and possibly sewage contamination for this river.

Fisheries effects at the McKenzie River watershed level would not measurably change. Continued use of the boat ramp and bank fishing near the site would not lead to detrimental effects to fish populations. Erosion and deposition would have no measurable change to overall habitat quantity or quality.

4.1.2 Issue 2: What would be the effects of the alternatives upon visitor safety and public enjoyment of a developed recreation site?

Direct Effects: Under this alternative, current difficulties would remain for ingress/egress and for launching watercraft. The site's non-defined activity areas would continue to encourage visitors to create their own opportunities at sites of their choosing; this would lead to conflicts when incompatible activities overlap (e.g., parking and picnicking). The site environment would fail to promote visitor responsibility for reduced impact. Minimal accommodation and safety risks for disabled and otherwise encumbered visitors would also continue.

Cumulative Effects: Recent in-stream activities conducted by EWEB (Eugene Water and Electric Board) near a popular, upstream launch site has diminished that site's utility for watercraft launching and created greater emphasis upon Taylor Landing as a watercraft launching opportunity.

4.2 Alternative 2

4.2.1 Issue: What would be the effects of the alternatives on water quality and T&E fish?

Direct Effects: Improvements to the boat ramp which include installation of pre-fabricated concrete pads and rip-rap placement around the ramp would lead to an overall reduction in sediment emanating from ramp use and annual inundation by high stream flows.

The native surface road just west of the boat ramp would be closed to vehicle access, and restored as a native surface footpath only. That portion of the road not needed for the footpath would be planted with native species. These measures would reduce the potential for erosion of these soils by winter river flows and visitor use. There is a possibility that during winter storm events, the river level could rise to an elevation where some erosion of the native surface path may occur. Native surface footpaths would continue to be susceptible to erosion during winter storm events and may deliver small amounts of sediment into the McKenzie River. No change to deposition from annual floodplain inundation would occur.

Improvement to the boat ramp would not be expected to lead to increased fishing disturbance. As such, no change to fish disturbance levels would be expected. Bank fishing would continue at current rates and locations.

Indirect Effects: Construction of a single vault toilet above the average high water mark would reduce potential for sewage introduction into the river from vandalism or flooding. The vault toilet would be closed, pumped and capped during the winter months. If a storm event raises the river levels to above 324.25 feet in elevation, there would be no danger of sewage entering the river due to this mitigation effort.

Spawning substrate material would be very slightly improved by the reduction of boat ramp erosion and deposition of materials downstream of the site. An immeasurable coarsening of streambed materials could occur.

Cumulative Effects: Protecting fluvial soils by planting with vegetation and ramp hardening (with aggregate, concrete panels, and asphalt) would reduce future sedimentation.

No change in overall fish disturbance and habitat quality and quantity would occur at the McKenzie River watershed scale.

4.2.2 Issue 2: What would be the effects of the alternatives upon ensuring visitor safety and public enjoyment of a developed recreation site?

Direct Effects: This alternative would provide an improved site portal and boat launch surface supporting easier ingress/egress and watercraft launching. Site definition of recreational activity areas would be limited to the immediate boat launch area. Accommodation for disabled and otherwise encumbered visitors would be limited to use of a toilet designed to meet American with Disabilities Act Requirements and Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. There would be no

designated disabled parking spot. The safety of disabled visitors who utilize a popular fishing spot located adjacent to the boat launch would be at risk.

The site environment would promote visitor responsibility for reduced impact. Other recreational activities such as picnicking, scenic viewing and fishing would not be enhanced.

Cumulative Effects: Recent in-stream activities conducted by EWEB (Eugene Water and Electric Board) near a popular, upstream launch site has diminished that site's utility for watercraft launching and created greater emphasis upon the project site as a watercraft launching opportunity.

4.3 Alternative 3

4.3.1 Issue: What would be the effect of the alternatives on water quality and T&E fish?

Direct Effects: Improvements to the boat ramp, which include installation of pre-fabricated concrete pads and rip-rap placement around the ramp, would lead to an overall reduction in sediment emanating from ramp use and annual inundation by high stream flows.

The native surface road just west of the boat ramp would be closed to vehicle access, and developed into a footpath to picnic sites. The footpath would be surfaced with compacted gravel, and that portion of the road not needed for the footpath would be planted with native species and restored. These measures would reduce the potential for erosion of these soils by winter river flows and visitor use. During winter storm events, the river level may rise to an elevation where some erosion of the compacted gravel path could occur. The picnic tables adjacent to the footpath may also be impacted by fluctuations in the river levels. Tables may increase the deposition of fine materials (sand, silt, small gravel) during times of annual inundation by creating zones of lower stream velocity.

Construction of the fishing platform with rip-rap armoring on the outside edge of the fill, geotextile, and an asphalt surface would minimize sedimentation to the river from the structure at all times of the year. The fishing platform may cause some changes in the stream flow pattern due to the fill placed within the floodplain. Deposition could occur upstream of platform and streambank scour may occur downstream of the platform at certain stream elevations and velocities.

Site improvements could lead to increased fishing pressure and watercraft use which in turn would lead to increased fish disturbance. Creating a fishing platform combined with greater bank fishing amenities could cause greater disturbance to spawning fish and fish migrating through the portion of the McKenzie River adjacent to the improvements.

Indirect Effects: Construction of a single vault toilet above the average high water mark would reduce potential for sewage introduction into the river from vandalism or flooding. The toilet would be located at an elevation above the projected 25 year flood event (324.25 feet). The vault toilet would be closed, pumped and capped during the winter months. If a storm event raises the river levels to above 324.25 feet in elevation, there would be no danger of sewage entering the river due to this mitigation effort.

Spawning substrate material would be very slightly improved by the reduction of

boat ramp erosion and deposition of materials downstream of the site. An almost immeasurable coarsening of streambed materials could occur.

Cumulative Effects: Protecting fluvial soils by planting with vegetation, hardening (with aggregate, concrete panels, and asphalt) would reduce potential future sedimentation.

A small increase to fish disturbance would have an imperceptible impact at the watershed scale. The effect would be another incremental addition to overall disturbance levels for listed fish species in the McKenzie River.

4.3.2 Issue 2: What would be the effects of the alternatives upon ensuring visitor safety and public enjoyment of a developed recreation site?

Direct Effects: This alternative would provide an improved site portal and boat launch surface supporting easier ingress/egress and watercraft launching. Well-defined activity areas would support day-use activities common to the site, and would minimize visitor conflicts and negative resource impacts. Accommodation for disabled and otherwise encumbered visitors is greatest under this alternative; all activity areas would be accessible. Alternative 3 would positively promote provide visitor responsibility for reduced impact. The safety of disabled visitors who utilize a popular fishing spot located adjacent to the boat launch would be improved in a manner consistent with the area's natural setting.

Cumulative Effects: Recent in-stream activities conducted by EWEB (Eugene Water and Electric Board) near a popular, upstream launch site has diminished that site's utility for watercraft launching and created greater emphasis upon the project site as a watercraft launching opportunity.

4.4 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES

4.4.1 Unaffected Resources

The following either are not present or would not be affected by any of the alternatives: American Indian right, Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns, prime or unique farm lands, solid or hazardous wastes, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, cultural resources, hazardous materials, and Visual Resource Management objectives.

4.4.2 Threatened and Endangered Wildlife

Northern Spotted Owl and Bald Eagle (Threatened)

Consultation for these species will be covered under the Willamette Province programmatic Biological Assessment for FY2004-05. No habitat for either of these species would be removed or degraded under the action alternatives.

Ambient noise levels would not be expected to increase measurably above current levels under the action alternatives because the ambient noise levels are already high and the reduced parking capacity would limit the number of people utilizing the site at any given time. The public use of the project area after project implementation would have no effect

on bald eagles or spotted owls.

4.4.3 Environmental Justice

To comply with Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, the Bureau of Land Management, Eugene District, will ensure that the public, including minority and low income communities, have adequate access to public information relating to human health or environmental planning, regulations, and enforcement as required by law.

The District has not identified any environmental effects, including human health, economic and social effects of Federal actions, including effects on minority populations, low-income populations, and Native American tribes, in this analysis.

5.0 LIST OF AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED

A summary of the proposed project was sent to those receiving the "Eye to the Future," December 2002 (approximately 250 mailings; A complete listing is available at the Eugene District Office).

This Environmental Analysis is being mailed to the following members of the public or organizations that have requested to be on the mailing list: In addition, the EA will be sent to various recreation partners and McKenzie Watershed Council partners.

John Bianco
Oregon DEQ
Jim Goodpasture
Pam Hewitt
Charles & Reida Kimmel
Lane County Land Management
Oregon Dept of Forestry
Oregon Natural Resources Council
The Pacific Rivers Council
John Poynter
Leroy Pruitt
Neal Miller
James Johnston
David Simone
Rich Wright

Roseburg Forest Products Co.
Peter Saraceno
Sierra Club - Many Rivers Group
Carol Logan, Kalapooya Sacred Circle Alliance
Swanson Group
Craig Tupper
Jan Wroncy
Kris and John Ward
Robert P Davison
Tom Stave, U of O Library
John Muir Project
Molly Widmer
Bart Pratt

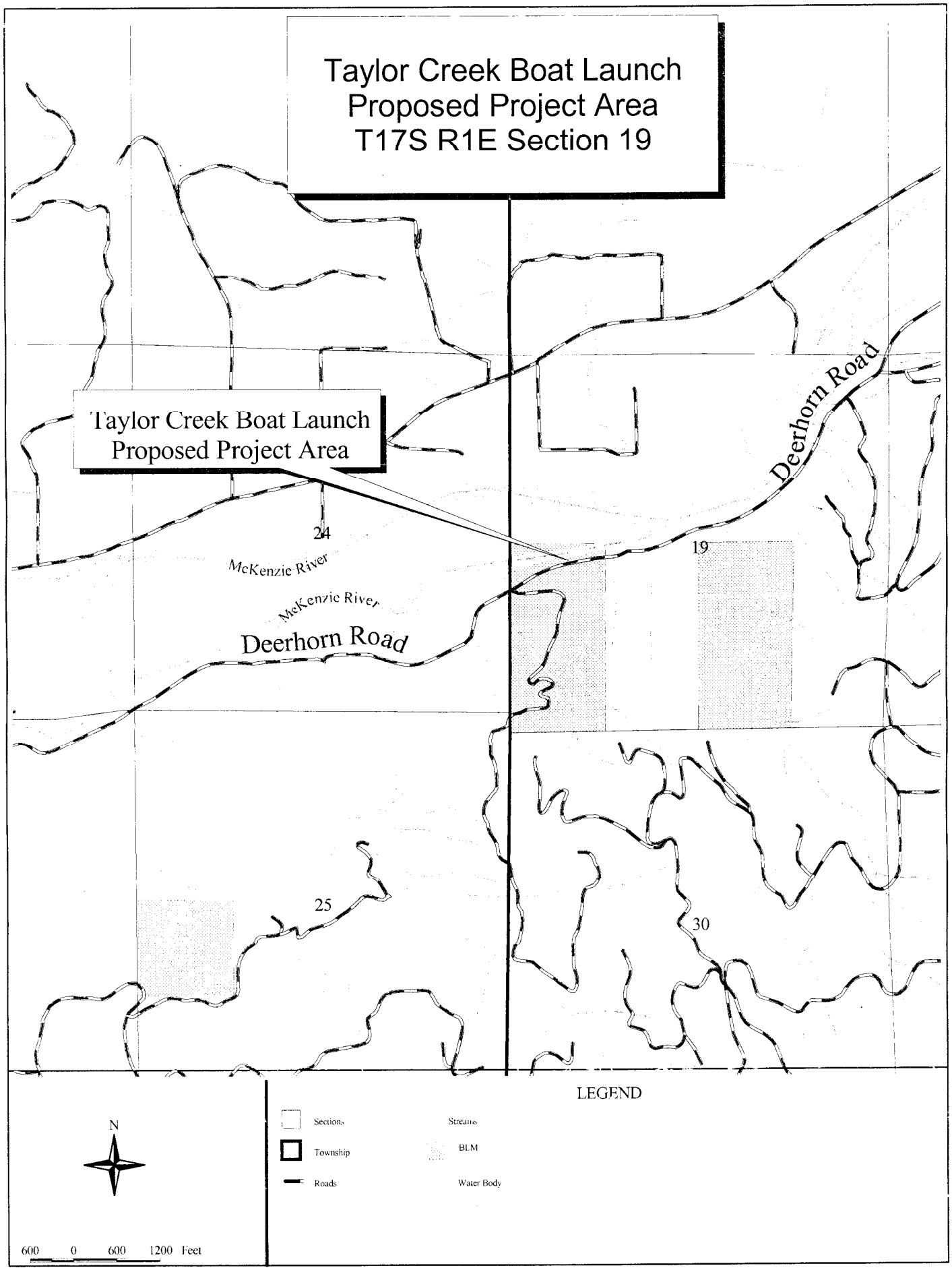
6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

NAME	TITLE	RESOURCE/ DISCIPLINE
Mark D'Aversa	Fisheries Biologist	Fisheries
Christie Hardenbrook	Environmental Specialist	Team Lead
Paula Larson	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife
Liz Aleman	Recreation Planner	Recreation
Cheshire Mayrsohn	Botanist	Botany
Kris Ward	Hydrologist	Water Resources

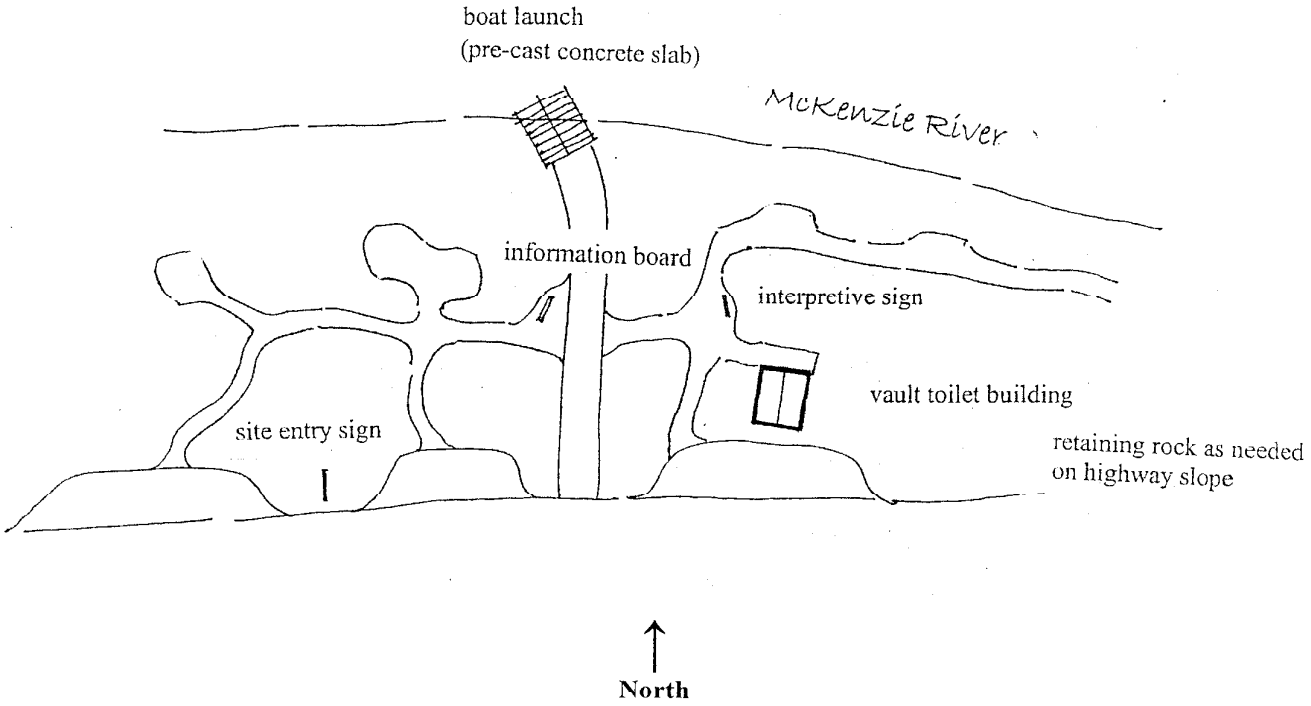
Appendix A

Map and Schematics of Action Alternatives


Taylor Creek Boat Launch
Proposed Project Area
T17S R1E Section 19
Taylor Creek Boat Launch
Proposed Project Area
Deerhorn Road
24
McKenzie River
McKenzie River
Deerhorn Road
19
25
30
LEGEND
Sections
Township
Roads
Streams
BLM
Water Body
N
600 0 600 1200 Feet

Taylor Creek Alternative 2

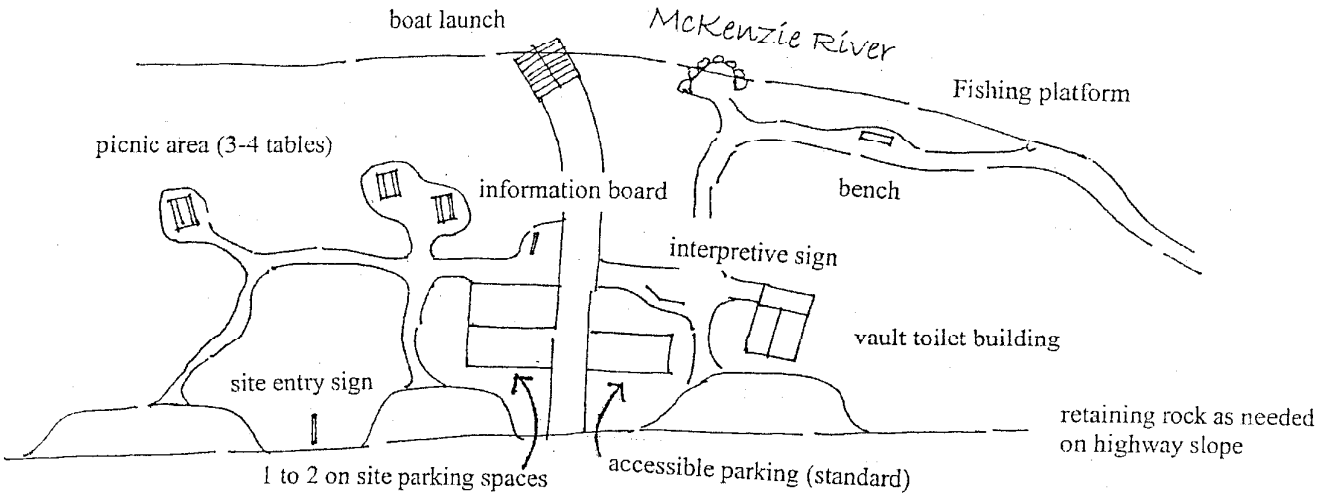
Prefabricated concrete panel boat launch, asphalt surface ingress/egress apron, vault toilet, retaining wall, closure of dirt road with unimproved access for foot traffic, and site signing structures.



All construction to meet universal access standards.
Not to scale. This is a schematic plan and final locations may vary.

Taylor Creek Alternative 3

Includes components listed under Alternative 2 with the addition of the following components: picnicking units, asphalt surface fishing/viewing platform, asphalt surface disabled parking and asphalt paths connecting to toilet and fishing platform, viewing benches, and compacted gravel footpath.



North

All construction to meet universal access standards.
Not to scale. This is a schematic plan and final locations may vary.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

Finding of No Significant Impact for Taylor Landing Recreation Site Improvements

Determination:

On the basis of the information contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action or alternative will not have significant environmental impacts not already addressed in the *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994) and the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (June 1995)*, and the Record of Decision for *Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (2001) with which this EA is in conformance, and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, a new environmental impact statement or supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

_____ _____
Field Manager, Upper Willamette Resource Area Date